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Le Président de l'Office européen des brevets
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AGFA-GEVAERT
Septestraat 27
2640 Mortsel
BELGIQUE

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(Falls die Bezeichnung der Erfindung nicht angegeben ist, siehe Beschreibung.
If no title is shown please refer to the description.
Si aucun titre n'est indiqué se référer à la description.)

Improved carrier of information bearing a watermark

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- 2 -

[DESCRIPTION]

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to a method for the preparation of an improved carrier of information, and to ID cards cut from it.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 In recent years, with the progress of information-oriented society several types of identification (ID card) cards have come into use. For instance, cards involved in the electronic transfer of money include bank cards, pay cards, credit cards and shopping cards. Different types of security cards authorize access to the bearer of
15 the card to particular areas such as a company (employee ID card), the military, a public service, the safe department of a bank, etc. For long time national states have issued identity cards to establish the national identity of their civilians. Still other types of identification cards include social security cards,
20 membership cards of clubs and societies, and driver's licence cards. Such ID cards usually contain information referring both to the authority issuing the card on the one hand and to the owner of the card. The first type of information may be general information such as a name and/or logo of the issuing authority, or security marks,
25 such as a watermark and security print, e.g. a repeating monochrome pattern or a gradually changing colour pattern which are difficult to counterfeit. The second type includes e.g. the unique card number, personal data such as a birth day, a photo of the owner, and a signature. The card can further contain hidden information and
30 therefore contain a magnetic strip or an electronic chip ("smart cards").

A large set of ID cards are usually prepared on a large carrier of information such as a web or sheet by a step and repeat process, after which the information carrier is cut into multiple items with
35 the appropriate dimensions each representing a personal ID card.

- 3 -

Smart cards and ID cards have now the standardized dimensions of 85.6 mm x 54.0 mm x 0.76 mm.

Normally, the card is protected by a plastic sheet material such as by lamination of the card to a plastic sheet or, as it is usually
5 the case by lamination between two plastic sheets.

In view of their widespread uses, especially in commercial transactions, such as cashing checks, credit purchases, etc., it is important that the person relying on the ID card to identify the bearer have maximum assurance that the ID card has not been altered
10 and/or that the ID card is not a counterfeit. A great deal of ingenuity has been employed to provide this desired degree of assurance. For example, specialized adhesive systems and lamination techniques have been developed to prevent or discourage alteration of ID cards. These systems and techniques are designed to achieve a
15 high degree of bonding efficiency between a surface of the card and any plastic sheet material bonded to it. Certain adhesive systems, for example, can provide what is known in the art as a "security seal". A "security seal" is best explained by describing what happens if an attempt is made to pull a plastic sheet material from
20 the surface of a card bonded to the plastic. If a "security seal" exists, all or at least portions of the adhered surface will be removed from the card together with the plastic sheet material. Accordingly, a "security seal" is normally established between the information-bearing surface of the card or document and the plastic.
25 Under such circumstances, removal of the plastic should also remove substantial portions of the information-bearing surface of the card to render the card unusable for alteration purposes. Adhesives or adhesive systems which can provide "security seals" are described in e.g. U.S. Pat. Nos. 3,582,439, 3,614,839 and 4,115,618. According to
30 US 4,322,461 a security seal can be provided by applying heat-sealable polymers so as to obtain a sealed envelop-type pouch.

Furtheron, the art's response to the counterfeiting problem has involved the integration of "verification features" with ID cards to
35 evidence their authenticity. The best known of these "verification features" involve signatures such as the signature of the one authorized to issue the ID card or the signature of the bearer.

- 4 -

Other "verification features" have involved the use of watermarks, fluorescent materials, validation patterns or markings and polarizing stripes among others. These "verification features" are integrated with ID cards in various ways and they may be visible or invisible in the finished card. If invisible, they can be detected by viewing the feature under conditions which render it visible. Details relating to the use of "verification features" in ID cards can be found in such patents as U.S. Pat. Nos. 2,984,030; 3,279,826; 3,332,775; 3,414,998; 3,675,948; 3,827,726 and 3,961,956.

The present invention extends the teachings on verification marks, and particularly on watermarks.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a method for the fabrication of an improved type of information carrier which can be easily manufactured, has an uncomplicated layer structure, and can be cut in a set of multiple ID cards.

It is a further object of the present invention that the information carrier thus obtained and the ID cards which are optionally cut from it bear a new type of watermark.

It is still another object of the present invention that the ID cards which can be cut from the information carrier are tamper proof.

The above-mentioned desired advantageous effects are realised, according to a first embodiment, by providing a method for producing a carrier of information, said method comprising the following steps, in order,

- (1) providing a two-layer assemblage comprising (i) a rigid sheet or web support optionally preprinted with security print, and (ii) a porous opaque ink receiving layer comprising a pigment and a binder,
- (2) printing digitally stored information onto said porous receiving layer by means of ink jet printing,
- (3) applying on top of said ink receiving layer in a predetermined

- 5 -

pattern a curable varnish, by means of printing, spraying or jetting,

(4) after application, before substantial penetration of said varnish in the ink receiving layer, curing said applied varnish,

5 whereby the parts of the ink receiving layer under said predetermined pattern remain non-transparent,

(5) overall covering the thus obtained assemblage by coating, printing, spraying or jetting, with a curable lacquer whereby said lacquer penetrates all areas of the ink receiving layer not covered
10 by the pattern of the varnish and renders them substantially transparent, and whereby the non-transparent pattern obtained by application of the varnish forms a watermark,

(6) subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a second curing step.

15 According to a second embodiment, there is provided a method for producing a carrier of information, said method comprising the following steps, in order,

(1') providing a two-layer assemblage comprising (i) a rigid sheet or web support optionally preprinted with security print, and (ii) a
20 porous opaque ink receiving layer comprising a pigment and a binder,

(2') printing digitally stored information onto said porous receiving layer by means of ink jet printing,

(3') applying on top of said ink receiving layer in a predetermined pattern a curable varnish by means of printing, spraying or jetting,
25 whereby said varnish penetrates the ink receiving layer, thereby creating a transparent pattern,

(4') after penetration, subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a curing step,

(5') overall covering the thus obtained assemblage by coating, printing, spraying or jetting, with a curable lacquer,
30

(6') before substantial penetration of said lacquer in the ink receiving layer, subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a second curing step, whereby the pattern penetrated by the varnish remains transparent and forms a transparent watermark, and the other parts
35 of the image carrier remain opaque.

- 6 -

In a preferred embodiment the application of the ink jet printed information and of the cured watermark is repeated multiple times according to a fixed pattern over the area of the information carrier, and finally the finished assemblage is cut into a set of
5 multiple identification (ID) cards.

Further advantages and embodiments of the present invention will become apparent from the following description.

10 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

We will describe now in more detail the particular layer arrangement and the ingredients of the information carrier in accordance with the present invention.

15

- the sheet or web support

The support for use in the present invention can be chosen from paper type and polymeric type supports well-known from photographic
20 technology. Paper types include plain paper, cast coated paper, polyethylene coated paper and polypropylene coated paper. Polymeric supports include cellulose acetate propionate or cellulose acetate butyrate, polyesters such as polyethylene terephthalate and polyethylene naphthalate, polyamides, polycarbonates, polyimides,
25 polyolefins, poly(vinylacetals), polyethers and polysulfonamides. Other examples of useful high-quality polymeric supports for the present invention include opaque white polyesters and extrusion blends of polyethylene terephthalate and polypropylene. Polyester film supports and especially polyethylene terephthalate are
30 preferred because of their excellent properties of dimensional stability. When such a polyester is used as the support material, a subbing layer may be employed to improve the bonding of the ink-receiving layer to the support. Useful subbing layers for this purpose are well known in the photographic art and include, for
35 example, polymers of vinylidene chloride such as vinylidene chloride

- 7 -

/acrylonitrile /acrylic acid terpolymers or vinylidene chloride
/methyl acrylate /itaconic acid terpolymers.

In a most preferred embodiment of the present invention the support
is colored or whitened polyvinyl chloride or polyethylene
5 terephthalate.

- the ink receiving layer

Essential to the present invention is that the ink receiving layer
10 is porous and opaque and contains a binder and a pigment.
The binder can be chosen from a list of compounds well-known in the
art including hydroxyethyl cellulose; hydroxypropyl cellulose;
hydroxyethylmethyl cellulose; hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose;
hydroxybutylmethyl cellulose; methyl cellulose; sodium carboxymethyl
15 cellulose; sodium carboxymethylhydroxyethyl cellulose; water soluble
ethylhydroxyethyl cellulose; cellulose sulfate; polyvinyl alcohol;
vinylalcohol copolymers; polyvinyl acetate; polyvinyl acetal;
polyvinyl pyrrolidone; polyacrylamide; acrylamide/acrylic acid
copolymer; polystyrene, styrene copolymers; acrylic or methacrylic
20 polymers; styrene/acrylic copolymers; ethylene-vinylacetate
copolymer; vinylmethyl ether/maleic acid copolymer; poly(2-
acrylamido-2-methyl propane sulfonic acid); poly(diethylene
triamine-co-adipic acid); polyvinyl pyridine; polyvinyl imidazole;
polyethylene imine epichlorohydrin modified; polyethylene imine
25 ethoxylated; polyethylene oxide; polyurethane; melamine resins;
gelatin; carrageenan; dextran; gum arabic; casein; pectin; albumin;
starch; collagen derivatives; collodion and agar-agar.
A preferred binder for the practice of the present invention is a
polyvinylalcohol (PVA), a vinylalcohol copolymer or modified
30 polyvinyl alcohol. Most preferably, the polyvinyl alcohol is a
silanol modified polyvinyl alcohol. Most useful commercially
available silanol modified polyvinyl alcohols can be found in the
POVAL R polymer series, trade name of Kuraray Co., Japan. This R
polymer series includes the grades R-1130, R-2105, R-2130, R-3109,
35 which differ mainly in the viscosity of their respective aqueous
solutions. The silanol groups are reactive to inorganic substances

- 8 -

such as silica or alumina. R-polymers can be easily crosslinked by changing the pH of their aqueous solutions or by mixing with organic substances and can form water resistant films.

5 The pigment may be chosen from the inorganic pigments well-known in the art such as silica, talc, clay, hydrotalcite, kaolin, diatomaceous earth, calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate, basic magnesium carbonate, aluminosilicate, aluminum trihydroxide, aluminum oxide (alumina), titanium oxide, zinc oxide, barium
10 sulfate, calcium sulfate, zinc sulfide, satin white, boehmite (alumina hydrate), zirconium oxide or mixed oxides.
In a preferred embodiment the main pigment is chosen from silica, aluminosilicate, alumina, calcium carbonate, alumina hydrate, and aluminum trihydroxide.

15 The use of aluminum oxide (alumina) in ink receiving layers is disclosed in several patents, e.g. in US 5,041,328, US 5,182,175, US 5,266,383, EP 218956, EP 835762 and EP 972650.
Commercially available types of aluminum oxide (alumina) include α - Al_2O_3 types, such as NORTON E700, available from Saint-Gobain
20 Ceramics & Plastics, Inc, γ - Al_2O_3 types, such as ALUMINUM OXID C from Degussa, Other Aluminum oxide grades, such as BAIKALOX CR15 and CR30 from Baikowski Chemie; DURALOX grades and MEDIALOX grades from Baikowski Chemie, BAIKALOX CR80, CR140, CR125, B105CR from Baikowski Chemie; CAB-O-SPERSE PG003 trademark from Cabot, CATALOX GRADES and
25 CATAPAL GRADES from from Sasol, such as PLURALOX HP14/150; colloidal Al_2O_3 types, such as ALUMINASOL 100; ALUMINASOL 200, ALUMINASOL 220, ALUMINASOL 300, and ALUMINASOL 520 trademarks from Nissan Chemical Industries or NALCO 8676 trademark from ONDEO Nalco.

A useful type of alumina hydrate is γ - $\text{AlO}(\text{OH})$, also called boehmite,
30 such as, in powder form, DISPERAL, DISPERAL HP14 and DISPERAL 40 from Sasol, MARTOXIN VPP2000-2 and GL-3 from Martinswerk GmbH.; Liquid boehmite alumina systems, e.g. DISPAL 23N4-20, DISPAL 14N-25, DISPERAL AL25 from Sasol. Patents on alumina hydrate include

- 9 -

EP 500021, EP 634286, US 5,624,428, EP 742108, US 6,238,047,
EP 622244, EP 810101, etc..

Useful aluminum trihydroxides include Bayerite, or α -Al(OH)₃, such
as PLURAL BT, available from Sasol, and Gibbsite, or γ -Al(OH)₃, such
5 as MARTINAL grades from Martinswerk GmbH, MARTIFIN grades, such as
MARTIFIN OL104, MARTIFIN OL 107 and MARTIFIN OL111 from Martinswerk
GmbH, MICRAL grades, such as MICRAL 1440, MICRAL 1500; MICRAL 632;
MICRAL 855; MICRAL 916; MICRAL 932; MICRAL 932CM; MICRAL 9400 from
JM Huber company; HIGILITE grades, e.g. HIGILITE H42 or HIGILITE
10 H43M from Showa Denka K.K., HYDRAL GRADES such as HYDRAL COAT 2,
HYDRAL COAT 5 and HYDRAL COAT 7, HYDRAL 710 and HYDRAL PGA, from
Alcoa Industrial Chemicals.

A useful type of zirconium oxide is NALCO OOS008 trademark of ONDEO
Nalco, acetate stabilized ZrO₂, ZR20/20, ZR50/20, ZR100/20 and ZRYS4
15 trademarks from Nyacol Nano Technologies.

Useful mixed oxides are SIRAL grades from Sasol, colloidal
metaloxides from Nalco such as Nalco 1056, Nalco TX10496, Nalco
TX11678.

20 Silica as pigment in ink receiving elements is disclosed in numerous
old and recent patents, e.g. US 4,892,591, US 4,902,568, EP 373573,
EP 423829, EP 487350, EP 493100, EP 514633, etc.. Different types of
silica may be used, such as crystalline silica, amorphous silica,
precipitated silica, gel silica, fumed silica, spherical and non-
25 spherical silica, calcium carbonate compounded silica such as
disclosed in US 5,281,467, and silica with internal porosity such as
disclosed in WO 00/02734.

The use of calcium carbonate in ink receiving layers is described in
e.g. DE 2925769 and US 5,185,213. The use of alumino-silicate is
30 disclosed in e.g. DE 2925769.

Mixtures of different pigments may be used.

In an alternative embodiment the main pigment can be chosen from
organic particles such as polystyrene, polymethyl methacrylate,
silicones, melamine-formaldehyde condensation polymers, urea-
35 formaldehyde condensation polymers, polyesters and polyamides.

- 10 -

Mixtures of inorganic and organic pigments can be used. However, most preferably the pigment is an inorganic pigment.

The pigment must be present in a sufficient coverage in order to render the ink receiving layer sufficiently opaque and porous. The
5 lower limit of the ratio by weight of the binder to the total pigment in the first ink receiving layer is preferably about 1:50, most preferably 1:20, while the upper limit thereof is about 2:1, most preferably 1:1. If the amount of the pigment exceeds the upper limit, the strength of the ink receiving layer itself is lowered,
10 and the resulting image hence tends to deteriorate in rub-off resistance and the like. On the other hand, if the binder to pigment ratio is too great, the ink-absorbing capacity of the resulting ink-receiving layer is reduced, and so the image formed may possibly be deteriorated.

15 Further, preferably, the refraction indices of the pigment on the one hand, and of the UV-curable composition which penetrates the ink receiving layer (see description lateron) on the other hand should match each other as closely as possible. The closer the match of the refraction indices the better the transparency which will be
20 obtained after impregnation of the receiver layer with the photopolymerizable composition.

The most preferred pigment is a silica type, more particularly an amorphous silica having a average particle size ranging from 1 μm to 15 μm , most preferably from 2 to 10 μm . A most useful commercial
25 compound is the amorphous precipitated silica type SIPERNAT 570, trade name from Degussa Co. It is preferably present in the receiving layer in an amount ranging from 5 g/m^2 to 30 g/m^2 . It has following properties :

- specific surface area (N_2 absorption): 750 m^2/g
- 30 - mean particle size (Multisizer, 100 μm capillarity) : 6.7 μm
- DBP adsorption : 175-320 $\text{g}/100 \text{ g}$
- refraction index : 1.45 à 1.47.

Since the refraction index of a typical UV-curable lacquer composition is about 1.47 à 1.49 it is clear that there is good

- 11 -

match with the refraction index of this particular silica type, and good transparency will be obtained.

Other usable precipitated silica types include SIPERNAT 310, 350 and 500, AEROSIL grades (trade mark of Degussa-Hüls AG), and SYLOID types (trade mark from Grace Co.).

A receiver layer containing a porous alumina pigment such as MARTINOX GL-1 does not become completely transparent on impregnation with a UV-curable composition since its refraction index is 1.6. On the other hand a layer with this pigment undergoes a strong improvement in adhesion between support and ink jet receiver layer on impregnation with a UV-curable composition.

Apart from the essential ingredients described above a cationic substance acting as mordant may be present in the ink receiving layer. Such substances increase the capacity of the layer for fixing and holding the dye of the ink droplets. A particularly suited compound is a poly(diallyldimethylammonium chloride) or, in short, a poly(DADMAC). These compounds are commercially available from several companies, e.g. Aldrich, Nalco, CIBA, Nitto Boseki Co., Clariant, BASF and EKA Chemicals.

Other useful cationic compounds include DADMAC copolymers such as copolymers with acrylamide, e.g. NALCO 1470 trade mark of ONDEO Nalco or PAS-J-81, trademark of Nitto Boseki Co., such as copolymers of DADMAC with acrylates, such as Nalco 8190, trademark of ONDEO Nalco; copolymers of DADMAC with SO₂, such as PAS-A-1 or PAS-92, trademarks of Nitto Boseki Co., copolymer of DADMAC with maleic acid, e.g. PAS-410, trademark of Nitto Boseki Co., copolymer of DADMAC with diallyl(3-chloro-2-hydroxypropyl)amine hydrochloride, eg. PAS-880, trademark of Nitto Boseki Co., dimethylamine-epichlorohydrine copolymers, e.g. Nalco 7135, trademark of ONDEO Nalco or POLYFIX 700, trade name of Showa High Polymer Co.; other POLYFIX grades which could be used are POLYFIX 601, POLYFIX 301, POLYFIX 301A, POLYFIX 250WS, and POLYFIX 3000 ; NEOFIX E-117, trade name of Nicca Chemical Co., a polyoxyalkylene polyamine dicyanodiamine, and REDIFLOC 4150, trade name of EKA Chemicals, a polyamine; MADAME (methacrylatedimethylaminoethyl = dimethylaminoethyl methacrylate)

- 12 -

or MADQUAT (methacryloxyethyltrimethylammonium chloride) modified polymers, e.g. ROHAGIT KL280, ROHAGIT 210, ROHAGIT SL144, PLEX 4739L, PLEX 3073 from Röhm, DIAFLOC KP155 and other DIAFLOC products from Diafloc Co., and BMB 1305 and other BMB products from EKA
5 chemicals; cationic epichlorohydrin adducts such as POLYCUP 171 and POLYCUP 172, trade names from Hercules Co.; from Cytec industries : CYPRO products, e.g. CYPRO 514/515/516, SUPERFLOC 507/521/567; cationic acrylic polymers, such as ALCOSTAT 567, trademark of CIBA, cationic cellulose derivatives such as CELQUAT L-200, H-100, SC-
10 240C, SC-230M, trade names of Starch & Chemical Co., and QUATRISOFT LM200, UCARE polymers JR125, JR400, LR400, JR30M, LR30M and UCARE polymer LK; fixing agents from Chukyo Europe: PALSET JK-512, PALSET JK512L, PALSET JK-182, PALSET JK-220, WSC-173, WSC-173L, PALSET JK-320, PALSET JK-320L and PALSET JK-350; polyethyleneimine and
15 copolymers, e.g. LUPASOL, trade name of BASF AG; triethanolamine-titanium-chelate, e.g. TYZOR, trade name of Du Pont Co.; copolymers of vinylpyrrolidone such as VIVIPRINT 111, trade name of ISP, a methacrylamido propyl dimethylamine copolymer; with dimethylaminoethylmethacrylate such as COPOLYMER 845 and COPOLYMER
20 937, trade names of ISP; with vinylimidazole, e.g. LUVIQUAT CARE, LUVITEC 73W, LUVITEC VPI55 K18P, LUVITEC VP155 K72W, LUVIQUAT FC905, LUVIQUAT FC550, LUVIQUAT HM522, and SOKALAN HP56, all trade names of BASF AG; polyamidoamines, e.g. RETAMINOL and NADAVIN, trade marks of Bayer AG; phosphonium compounds such as disclosed in EP 609930 and
25 other cationic polymers such as NEOFIX RD-5, trademark of Nicca Chemical Co.

The ink receiving layer may further contain well-known conventional ingredients, such as surfactants serving as coating aids, hardening
30 agents, plasticizers, whitening agents and matting agents. Surfactants may be any of the cationic, anionic, amphoteric, and non-ionic ones as described in JP-A 62-280068 (1987). Examples of the surfactants are N-alkylamino acid salts, alkylether carboxylic acid salts, acylated peptides, alkylsulfonic acid salts,
35 alkylbenzene and alkyl-naphthalene sulfonic acid salts, sulfosuccinic acid salts, α -olefin sulfonic acid salts, N-acylsulfonic acid salts, sulfonated oils, alkylsulfonic acid salts, alkylether sulfonic acid

- 13 -

salts, alkylallylethersulfonic acid salts, alkylamidesulfonic acid salts, alkylphosphoric acid salts, alkyletherphosphoric acid salts, alkylallyletherphosphoric acid salts, alkyl and alkylallylpolyoxyethylene ethers, alkylallylformaldehyde condensed acid salts, alkylallylethersulfonic acid salts, alkylamidesulfonic acid salts, alkylphosphoric acid salts, alkyletherphosphoric acid salts, alkylallyletherphosphoric acid salts, alkyl and alkylallylpolyoxyethylene ethers, alkylallylformaldehyde condensed polyoxyethylene ethers, blocked polymers having polyoxypropylene, polyoxyethylene polyoxypropylalkylethers, polyoxyethyleneether of glycolesters, polyoxyethyleneether of sorbitanesters, polyoxyethyleneether of sorbitolesters, polyethyleneglycol aliphatic acid esters, glycerol esters, sorbitane esters, propyleneglycol esters, sugaresters, fluoro C₂-C₁₀ alkylcarboxylic acids, disodium N-perfluorooctanesulfonyl glutamate, sodium 3-(fluoro-C₆-C₁₁-alkyloxy)-1-C₃-C₄ alkyl sulfonates, sodium 3-(~~ω~~-fluoro-C₆-C₈-alkanoyl-N-ethylamino)-1-propane sulfonates, N-[3-(perfluorooctanesulfonamide)-propyl]-N,N-dimethyl-N-carboxymethylene ammonium betaine, fluoro-C₁₁-C₂₀ alkylcarboxylic acids, perfluoro-C₇-C₁₃-alkyl-carboxylic acids, perfluorooctane sulfonic acid diethanolamide, Li, K and Na perfluoro-C₄-C₁₂-alkyl sulfonates, N-propyl-N-(2-hydroxyethyl)perfluorooctane sulfonamide, perfluoro-C₆-C₁₀-alkylsulfonamide-propyl-sulfonyl-glycinates, bis-(N-perfluorooctylsulfonyl-N-ethanolaminoethyl)phosphonate, mono-perfluoro C₆-C₁₆ alkyl-ethyl phosphonates, and perfluoroalkylbetaine.

Useful cationic surfactants include N-alkyl dimethyl ammonium chloride, palmityl trimethyl ammonium chloride, dodecyldimethylamine, tetradecyldimethylamine, ethoxylated alkyl guanidine-amine complex, oleamine hydroxypropyl bistrimonium chloride, oleyl imidazoline, stearyl imidazoline, cocamine acetate, palmitamine, dihydroxyethylcocamine, cocotrimonium chloride, alkyl

- 14 -

polyglycolether ammonium sulphate, ethoxylated oleamine, lauryl pyridinium chloride, N-oleyl-1,3-diaminopropane, stearamidopropyl dimethylamine lactate, coconut fatty amide, oleyl hydroxyethyl imidazoline, isostearyl ethylimidonium ethosulphate, lauramidopropyl
5 PEG-dimoniumchloride phosphate, palmityl trimethylammonium chloride, and cetyltrimethylammonium bromide.

Especially useful are the fluorocarbon surfactants as described in e.g. US-P 4,781,985, having a structure of :

$F(CF_2)_4-9CH_2CH_2SCH_2CH_2N^+R_3X^-$ wherein R is a hydrogen or an alkyl

10 group; and in US-P 5,084,340, having a structure of:

$CF_3(CF_2)_mCH_2CH_2O(CH_2CH_2O)_nR$ wherein $m = 2$ to 10 ; $n = 1$ to 18 ; R is hydrogen or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms. These surfactants are commercially available from DuPont and 3M. The concentration of the surfactant component in the ink-receiving layer
15 is typically in the range of 0.1 to 2 %, preferably in the range of 0.4 to 1.5 % and is most preferably 0.75 % by weight based on the total dry weight of the layer.

The ink-receiving layer may be crosslinked to provide such desired features as waterfastness and non-blocking characteristics. The
20 crosslinking is also useful in providing abrasion resistance and resistance to the formation of fingerprints on the element as a result of handling. There are a vast number of known crosslinking agents - also known as hardening agents - that will function to crosslink film forming binders. Hardening agents can be used
25 individually or in combination and in free or in blocked form. A great many hardeners, useful for the present invention, are known, including formaldehyde and free dialdehydes, such as succinaldehyde and glutaraldehyde, blocked dialdehydes, active esters, sulfonate esters, active halogen compounds, isocyanate or blocked isocyanates,
30 polyfunctional isocyanates, melamine derivatives, s-triazines and diazines, epoxides, active olefins having two or more active bonds, carbodiimides, zirconium complexes, e.g. BACOTE 20, ZIRMEL 1000 or zirconium acetate, trademarks of MEL Chemicals, titanium complexes, such as TYZOR grades from DuPont, isoxazolium salts substituted in
35 the 3-position, esters of 2-alkoxy-N-carboxy-dihydroquinoline,

- 15 -

N-carbamoylpyridinium salts, hardeners of mixed function, such as halogen-substituted aldehyde acids (e.g. mucochloric and mucobromic acids), onium substituted acroleins and vinyl sulfones and polymeric hardeners, such as dialdehyde starches and
5 copoly(acroleinmethacrylic acid), and oxazoline functional polymers, e.g. EPOCROS WS-500, and EPOCROS K-1000 series, and maleic anhydride copolymers, e.g. GANTREZ AN119

The ink-receiving layers and the optional supplementary layers of the present invention may also comprise a plasticizer such as
10 ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene glycol, polyethylene glycol, glycerol monomethylether, glycerol monochlorohydrin, ethylene carbonate, propylene carbonate, tetrachlorophthalic anhydride, tetrabromophthalicanhydride, urea phosphate, triphenylphosphate, glycerolmonostearate, propylene glycol
15 monostearate, tetramethylene sulfone, n-methyl-2-pyrrolidone, n-vinyl-2-pyrrolidone.

The ink-receiving layers and optional extra layers of the present invention may also comprise ingredients to improve the lightfastness of the printed image, such as antioxidants, UV-absorbers, peroxide
20 scavengers, singlet oxygen quenchers such as hindered amine light stabilizers, (HALS compounds) etc..Stilbene compounds are a preferred type of UV-absorber.

- the curable varnish and lacquer compositions

25 The curable varnish and lacquer compositions are similar compositions. However, to avoid confusion, we have somewhat arbitrarily designated the term "varnish" to the curable composition which is applied pattern-wise in both embodiments of the invention,
30 and the term "lacquer" to the composition which is applied overall.

The varnish and lacquer may in principle be thermally curable compositions, but far most preferably, they are both photopolymerizable compositions which are cured after application by
35 means of UV light.

- 16 -

The essential ingredients of a typical UV-curable photopolymerizable composition to be applied on top of the ink receiving layer are a monomer and a photoinitiator.

A wide variety of photopolymerizable and photocrosslinkable

5 compounds can be used in the present invention. Suitable monomers include the monomers disclosed in DE-OS Nos. 4005231, 3516256, 3516257, 3632657 and US 4,629,676, unsaturated esters of polyols, particularly such esters of the α -methylene carboxylic acids, e.g. ethylene diacrylate, glycerol tri(meth)acrylate, diethylene glycol
10 di(meth)acrylate, 1,3-propanediol di(meth)acrylate, 1,2,4-butanetriol tri(meth)acrylate, 1,4-cyclohexanediol di(meth)acrylate, 1,4-benzenediol di(meth)acrylate, pentaerythritol tetra(meth)acrylate, pentaerythritol triacrylate, dipentaerythritol pentacrylate, trimethylolpropane triacrylate, 1,5-pentadiol
15 di(meth)acrylate, the bis-acrylates and bis-methacrylates of polyethylene glycols of molecular weight 200-500; unsaturated amides, particularly those of the α -methylene carboxylic acids, and especially those of α,ω -diamines and oxygen-interrupted ω -diamines, such as bis-acrylamide, methylene bis-methacrylamide, 1,6-
20 hexamethylene bis-acrylamide, diethylene triamine tris-methacrylamide, bis(γ -methacrylamidopropoxy)ethane, β -methacrylamidoethyl methacrylate, N-(β -hydroxyethyl)- β -(methacrylamido)ethyl acrylate, and N,N-bis(β -methacryloyloxyethyl)acrylamide; vinyl esters, e.g. divinyl
25 succinate, divinyl adipate, divinyl phthalate, divinyl butane-1,4-disulphonate; and unsaturated aldehydes, e.g. sorbaldehyde (hexadienal).

The photopolymerizable composition may also comprise polymers and/or oligomers comprising two or more different polymerizable functions,
30 e.g. acrylated epoxies, polyester acrylates, urethane acrylates, etc..

It is also possible to use monofunctional (meth)acrylic acid esters as monomer provided they are not too volatile and do not spread an unwanted odour. Suitable compounds include n-octylacrylate,
35 decylacrylate, decylmethacrylate, stearylacrylate,

- 17 -

stearylmethacrylate, cyclohexylacrylate, cyclohexylmethacrylate, phenylethylacrylate, phenylethylmethacrylate.

The most preferred compounds comprise one or more (meth)acrylate functional groups.

5 Other classes of photopolymerizable compounds containing one or more (meth)acrylate groups are reactive multifunctional monomers as disclosed in EP 502562.

Suitable photoinitiators are a wide variety of compounds or compound combinations which are known for this purpose. Examples are benzoin
10 ethers, benzil ketals, polycyclic quinones, benzophenone derivatives, triarylimidazolyl dimers, photosensitive trihalomethyl compounds, for example trichloromethyl-s-triazines. Preference is given to 2,3-bisarylquinoxalines, as described in US-A 3,765,898, and 2-aryl-4,6-bistrichloromethyl-s-triazines. The amount of
15 photoinitiator or photoinitiator combination is generally between 1 and 25% by weight, preferably between 5 and 15% by weight.

The UV curable composition may also contain a minor amount of a heat polymerization inhibitor which prevents premature polymerization before the UV curing step. Examples of such inhibitors include p-
20 methoxyphenol, hydroquinone, aryl- or alkyl substituted hydroquinone, t-butylcatechol, pyrogallol, copper(I) chloride, phenothiazine, chloranil, naphtylamine, α -naphtol, 2,6-di-t-butyl-p-cresol, etc.. A preferred polymerization inhibitor is 2-methyl hydroquinone. The heat polymerization inhibitors are preferable used
25 in an amount of 0.001 to 5 parts by weight per 100 parts of monomer. Optionally the composition may also contain a minor amount of organic solvent, e.g. ethyl acetate.

Following commercially available compounds (chemical and commercial names) can be used with good result in the UV curable composition in
30 connection with the present invention (without meaning to be exhaustive).

Photopolymerizable monomers/oligomers :

(chemical name ; type, vendor)

- pentaerythritol triacrylate ; SR-444 (Sartomer)
- 35 - trimethylolpropane triacrylate ; SR-351 (Sartomer)
- dipropylene glycol diacrylate ; SR-508 (Sartomer)

- 18 -

- amine modified polyether acrylate oligomer ; CN-501 (Sartomer)
- isobornyl acrylate ; SR-506 (Sartomer)
- diethyleneglycol divinylether ; RAPI-CURE DVE-2 (ISP)
- triethyleneglycol divinylether ; RAPI-CURE DVE-3 (ISP)
- 5 - urethane acrylate blended with 2(2-ethoxyethoxy)ethylacrylate (SR-256) ; CN-966H90 (Sartomer)
- polybutadiene dimethyl acrylate ; CN-301 (Sartomer)
- low viscosity oligomer ; CN-135 (Sartomer)
- low viscosity oligomer ; CN-137 (Sartomer)

10

Photoinitiators :

- IRGACURE 907 (from Ciba-Geigy Co.)
- NOVOPOL PI3000 (from Rahn Co.)
- GENOCURE DEAP (from Rahn Co.)
- 15 - IRGACURE 184 (from Ciba-Geigy Co.)
- EZACURE KK (from Fratelli Lamberti Co.)
- IRGACURE 500 (from Ciba-Geigy Co.)
- IRGACURE 819 (from Ciba-Geigy Co.)

20 Thermal initiators :

AIBN - dicumyl peroxide - benzoyl peroxide - t-butyl peroxide - VAZO compounds (from DuPont Co.), e.g. VAZO 52 - LUPEROX (from Atofina Co.), e.g. 233, 10, 11, 231, 101, - hydroperoxides, and peresters.

25 The varnish and lacquer compositions may also contain a colorant, which may be a soluble dye or a pigment.

Having described the principal ingredients we will now discuss in more details the different steps of the process of the present
30 invention.

According to a first embodiment the method for producing an information carrier comprises following steps, in order,

- (1) providing a two-layer assemblage comprising (i) a rigid sheet or
35 web support optionally preprinted with security print, and (ii) a porous opaque ink receiving layer comprising a pigment and a binder,

- 19 -

(2) printing digitally stored information onto said porous receiving layer by means of ink jet printing,

(3) applying on top of said ink receiving layer in a predetermined pattern a curable varnish, by means of printing, spraying or
5 jetting,

(4) after application, before substantial penetration of said varnish in the ink receiving layer, curing said applied varnish, whereby the parts of the ink receiving layer under said predetermined pattern remain non-transparent,

10 (5) overall covering the thus obtained assemblage by coating, printing, spraying or jetting, with a curable lacquer whereby said lacquer penetrates all areas of the ink receiving layer not covered by the pattern of the varnish and renders them substantially transparent, and whereby the non-transparent pattern obtained by
15 application of the varnish forms a watermark,

(6) subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a second curing step.

The rigid sheet or web support, as explained above, may be optionally preprinted with so-called security print. The security
20 print may, for instance, include a concrete recognizable design, or an abstract periodically repeating monochrome or multichrome pattern, or a gradually changing colour pattern, which gradually changes in hue and/or density of the colours, and is in this way difficult to counterfeit. Preferably the spectral characteristics of
25 the inks of the security print are chosen so that they are difficult to copy by means of a commercial colour copier. This security print may further contain e.g. a logo, name or abbreviation of the issuing authority of the information carrier. This security print can be applied by any known printing technique, e.g. letterpress,
30 lithographic printing, gravure printing, silk screen printing, etc. A preferred technique is driographic printing being a waterless variant of lithographic printing whereby no fountain solution is applied to the printing press.

When the information carrier is meant to be cut later on in multiple
35 identity cards the security print is repeatedly applied over multiple areas of the web or sheet by a step and repeat process thus

- 20 -

giving rise to multiple identical items. These multiple identical items are distributed over the support according to a fixed pattern, e.g. a rectangular grid.

Then on top of the optionally preprinted sheet or web support an ink receiving layer is coated the composition of which is extensively explained above. This ink receiving layer may be coated onto the support by any conventional coating technique, such as dip coating, knife coating, extrusion coating, spin coating, slide hopper coating and curtain coating.

It is essential to the present invention that this ink receiving layer is printed with a digitally stored set of information, by means of an ink jet printing. In a most preferred embodiment this digitally stored information is personalized information different for each individual item present on the information carrier. For instance, this personalized information may be a unique individual card number assigned to the future bearer of the card, or the expiry date of the validity of the card, or personal data of the future bearer, e.g. a birth day, and/or a photo. Again, when the information carrier is meant to be cut in multiple ID cards, the ink jet printing step is repeated over multiple areas of the support in register with the security print pattern when present, thereby providing each item with different personalized information.

The ink jet printing process may be performed by any known technique known in the art. In a first type of process a continuous droplet stream is created by applying a pressure wave pattern. This process is known as continuous ink jet printing. In a first embodiment the droplet stream is divided into droplets that are electrostatically charged, deflected and recollected, and into droplets that remain uncharged, continue their way undeflected, and form the image.

Alternatively, the charged deflected stream forms the image and the uncharged undeflected jet is recollected. In this variant of continuous ink jet printing several jets are deflected to a different degree and thus record the image (multideflection system). According to a second process the ink droplets can be created "on demand" ("DOD" or "drop on demand" method) whereby the printing device ejects the droplets only when they are used in imaging on a

- 21 -

receiver thereby avoiding the complexity of drop charging, deflection hardware, and ink recollection. In drop-on-demand the ink droplet can be formed by means of a pressure wave created by a mechanical motion of a piezoelectric transducer (so-called "piezo method"), or by means of discrete thermal pushes (so-called "bubble jet" method, or "thermal jet" method).

Ink compositions for ink jet typically include following ingredients : dyes or pigments, water and/or organic solvents, humectants such as glycols, detergents, thickeners, polymeric binders,

preservatives, etc.. It will be readily understood that the optimal composition of such an ink is dependent on the ink jetting method used and on the nature of the substrate to be printed. The ink compositions can be roughly divided in :

- water based ; the drying mechanism involves absorption, penetration and evaporation;

- oil based ; the drying involves absorption and penetration;

- solvent based ; the drying mechanism involves primarily evaporation;

- hot melt or phase change : the ink vehicle is liquid at the ejection temperature but solid at room temperature ; drying is replaced by solidification;

- UV-curable ; drying is replaced by polymerization.

The colorants present in the ink jet ink may be dyes which are molecularly dissolved in the ink fluid, e.g. acid dyes which are bound by a cationic mordant in the ink receiver, or they may be pigments which are finely dispersed in the ink fluid.

According to steps (3) and (4) of the first embodiment a curable varnish composition, preferable UV-curable as explained above, is applied on top of the ink receiving layer in a predetermined pattern, and is cured, preferable by UV light, before it can substantially penetrate into the ink receiving layer, so that the layer underneath said predetermined pattern remains non-transparent.

Again, when the information carrier is meant to be cut in multiple ID cards, the application and curing of the varnish is repeated over multiple areas of the information carrier in register with the

- 22 -

multiple different items already present consisting of optional security print and personalized information.

According to step (5) the thus obtained assemblage is overall covered by coating, printing, spraying or jetting of a curable
5 lacquer composition, preferably UV-curable as explained above.

According to the first embodiment this lacquer is allowed to penetrate all areas of the ink receiving layer not covered by the predetermined pattern of the varnish. These areas on penetration by
the lacquer gradually change to transparent. As explained earlier

10 the better the match of the refraction indices of the lacquer composition and the pigment in the receiver the better the transparency. As a result the predetermined pattern of the varnish forms a non-transparent watermark on a transparent background. This watermark can have any form, e.g. a concrete design or alpha-
15 numerical character, or a geometrical figure, or an abstract design. Finally in step (6) the thus obtained assemblage is subjected to a second curing step, preferable UV-curing.

In a preferred embodiment the method comprises an additional step (5bis), performed between steps (5) and (6), of laminating a
20 protective foil on top of the assemblage before the final curing step.

Apparatuses for UV-curing are known to those skilled in the art and are commercially available. For example, the curing proceeds with medium pressure mercury vapour lamps with or without electrodes, or
25 pulsed xenon lamps. These ultraviolet sources usually are equipped with a cooling installation, an installation to remove the produced ozone and optionally a nitrogen inflow to exclude air from the surface of the product to be cured during radiation processing. An intensity of 40 to 240 W/cm in the 200-400 nm region is usually
30 employed. An example of a commercially available ultraviolet medium-pressure electrodeless mercury vapour lamp is the model VPS/I600 curing system of Fusion UV systems Ltd., UK. A pulsed xenon flash lamp is commercially available from IST Strahlentechnik GmbH, Nürtingen, Germany. Using the Fusion model one has also the
35 possibility to use metal halide doped Hg vapour or XeCl excimer lamps, each with its specific UV emission spectrum. This permits a

- 23 -

higher degree of freedom in formulating the curing composition : a more efficient curing is possible using the lamp with the most appropriate spectral characteristics.

As a result of the curing the cohesive force of the receiver layer
5 and the adhesive force between the receiver and the support are strongly improved rendering in this way the information carrier tamper proof since it has become strongly resistant to mechanical and chemical influences.

10 The substantial non-penetration of the ink-receiving layer by the varnish and the thorough penetration by the lacquer can be realized by controlling the penetration time and/or the viscosity of the composition. In the first case the time between the application of the varnish and its curing is so short that the varnish is unable to
15 penetrate substantially, while the lacquer is given ample time to penetrate. In the latter case the viscosity of the varnish is clearly higher than the viscosity of the lacquer influencing in this way the penetration rate. Also the affinity of the particle ink type used may play a role in the penetration speed. For instance, a
20 hydrophobic oil based ink will slower penetrate a rather hydrophilic receiver layer, such as a silica containing layer, than an aqueous hydrophilic ink.

In the second embodiment of the present invention a negative image
25 is obtained compared to the first embodiment. According to this second embodiment a method is provided for producing a carrier of information, said method comprising following steps, in order,
(1') providing a two-layer assemblage comprising (i) a rigid sheet or web support optionally preprinted with security print, and (ii) a
30 porous opaque ink receiving layer comprising a pigment and a binder,
(2') printing digitally stored information onto said porous receiving layer by means of ink jet printing,
(3') applying on top of said ink receiving layer in a predetermined pattern a curable varnish by means of printing, spraying or jetting,
35 whereby said varnish penetrates the ink receiving layer, thereby creating a transparent pattern,

- 24 -

(4') after penetration, subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a curing step,

(5') overall covering the thus obtained assemblage by coating, printing, spraying or jetting, with a curable lacquer,

5 (6') before substantial penetration of said lacquer in the ink receiving layer, subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a second curing step, whereby the pattern penetrated by the varnish remains transparent and forms a transparent watermark, and the other parts of the image carrier remain opaque.

10

As can be seen, in this embodiment a negative image is obtained compared to the first embodiment : a transparent watermark on an opaque background. The penetration behaviour of varnish and lacquer are reversed compared to the first embodiment. This behaviour again
15 is controlled by the viscosity and/or the penetration time.

Similar remarks as for the first embodiment can be made on the repetition over multiple items according to a fixed pattern of the optional security print, the personalized information and the
20 watermark pattern, all in register with each other. In this preferred embodiment the method preferably comprises the additional step (7) or (7') of cutting the finished assemblage by known cutting means into a set of multiple ID cards, each carrying optional security print, watermark, and personalized information. Most types
25 of ID cards have now the standardized dimensions of 85.6 mm x 54.0 mm x 0.76 mm. This final thickness can be reached by thermal lamination of one or more polymeric foils, e.g. PVC foils. The finished ID card can serve as an identity card, a security card, a driver's licence card, a social security card, a bank card, a
30 membership card, a time registration card, a pay card and a credit card, etc..

Apart from the features described above the finished ID card may comprise additional security elements or information carriers such as a hologram, a magnetic strip, or a chip ("smart cards").

35

- 25 -

The present invention will now be illustrated by the following examples without however being limited thereto.

5

EXAMPLES

Example 1

- 10 A dispersion A was prepared by mixing following ingredients :
- 18.7 g of silica SIPERNAT 570 (Degussa Co.)
 - 2.7 g of silanol modified polyvinyl alcohol POVAL R-3109 (Kuraray Co.)
 - 1.7 g Of CAT-FLOC T2 (Calgon Europe N.V.)
 - 15 - 0.03 % of a biocide
 - 0.03 % of citric acid.
 - 55.14 g of water

- This dispersion was used to prepare following ink receiver
- 20 composition:
- 9.4 g of water
 - 9.9 g of a copoly(ethylene-vinylacetate) latex, VINNAPAS EP1 (Air Products & Chem.), 50 % dispersion in water
 - 0.4 g of poly(diallyldimethylammonium chloride) CAT FLOC-T2
 - 25 (Calgon Europe N.V.)
 - 78.3 g of dispersion A
 - 2 g of surfactant cetyltrimethylammonium bromide.

- The thus prepared ink receiver composition was coated on a white
- 30 opaque polyvinyl chloride support, having a thickness of 165 µm, which was printed before by means of driographic printing with gradually changing colour patterns, serving as security print. The wet coating thickness of this ink receiver layer was 60 µm. After drying the ink receiver layer was printed by means of EPSON STYLUS
- 35 COLOR 900 ink jet printer with a set of digitally stored personal

- 26 -

information, like photo, name, adress, birthday, birth place, identification number, etc..

The obtained image containing assemblage was then locally, in a predetermined pattern, e.g. in the form of a design, overprinted two
5 times in register with Akzo Nobel UV screen varnish UV000100-03 (viscosity 650 mPa.s at 20°C) by means of screen printing technique. A NBC monofilament polyester screen of 120 mesh/cm was used.

Immediately after locally printing of the pattern, before the varnish could penetrate substantially the ink receiving layer, the
10 assemblage was subjected to a UV exposure thereby curing the area of the pattern. The curing was performed by means of a DRSE-120 conveyor provided with a VPS/1600 UV lamp (240 W/cm - speed 20 cm/s).

In the next step the assemblage was covered integrally by means of a
15 coating knife with a UV lacquer having following composition :

- 34.4 % of amino modified polyether acrylate oligomer CRAYNOR 501 (= CN501) (from Sartomer Co.)
- 51.6 % dipropyleneglycol diacrylate (DPGDA) (SR-508 from Sartomer)
- 2 % of ethyl acetate
- 20 - 2 % of a 10% solution of methyl hydroquinone in CN501/SR-508 40/60
- 10 % of photoinitiator IRGACURE 907 (Ciba-Geigy Co.).

Only on those places were previously no UV screen varnish was printed the overall coated UV-lacquer was able to penetrate in the
25 opaque ink receiver layer and made it transparent in about one minute after application. Then a transparent protective polyethylene terephthalate (PET) foil was laminated on top of the assemblage. An overall UV curing was performed by means of a DRSE-120 conveyor provided with a VPS/1600 UV lamp (240 W/cm - speed 20 cm/s).

30 The underlying driographic security print was only clearly revealed in those where no pattern-wise UV screen printed varnish was present. The non-transparent design formed by the cured varnish represented a watermark.

35 Example 2

- 27 -

A white opaque polyvinyl chloride support, having a thickness of 165µm, which was printed before by means of driographic printing with gradually changing colour patterns serving as security print, was coated with the ink receiver composition as described in ex. 1.

5 The wet coating thickness of this ink receiver layer was 60µm.

After drying the ink receiver layer was printed by means of an EPSON STYLUS COLOR 900 ink jet printer with a set of digitally stored personal information (photo, name and address, birthday and -place, identification number, etc.).

10 The obtained image containing assemblage was then pattern-wise overprinted 5 times in register - in order to obtain a sufficiently thick varnish layer- with a UV-curable inkjettable varnish.

Composition of the UV-curable inkjettable varnish :

- 34.4 % of amine modified polyether acrylate oligomer CRAYNOR 501
15 (= CN501) (from Sartomer Co.)

- 51.6 % of dipropyleneglycol diacrylate (DPGDA) (SR-508 from Sartomer)

- 2.00 % of ethyl acetate

2.00 % of a 10% solution of methylhydroquinone in CN501/SR-508 40/60

20 - 10 % of photoinitiator IRGACURE 907 (Ciba-Geigy Co.).

The viscosity of the varnish composition was 17 mPa.s at 20°C.

A Spectra 256 UV piezoelectric print head (92 dpi - head voltage 155V - jet frequency 2 kHz) was used for the consecutive printing of the UV-varnish image on the ink receiver composition.

25 The jetted UV-varnish was able to penetrate in the opaque ink receiver layer and made it transparent pattern-wise.

2 minutes after the UV-varnish was pattern-wise jetted on the inkjet receiver, the assemblage was subjected to UV-light by means of a DRSE-120 conveyer provided with VPS/1600 UV lamp (240 W/cm - speed
30 20 cm/sec.).

In the next step the assemblage was covered integrally by means of a coating knife with an Akzo Nobel Inks UVF00106-405 UV-curable flexo lacquer (viscosity 220 mPa.s at 20°C) at a coating thickness of 60 µm, instantly followed by laminating a transparent protective PET-
35 foil (thickness 100µm) on top of the UV-lacquer layer. Immediately after lamination the obtained layer assemblage was cured in the same

- 28 -

manner as described above. The obtain a complete curing two passes were necessary. The lapse of time between the coating step and the UV-curing step was 15 seconds maximally.

Only on those places where previously UV-varnish was jetted, the ink
5 receiver layer was made transparent.

The underlying drierographic security print was only clearly revealed in those areas where pattern-wise ink jetted UV-varnish was present, whereby a watermark was created.

10 Having described in detail preferred embodiments of the current invention, it will now be apparent to those skilled in the art that numerous modifications can be made therein without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the appending claims.

- 29 -

[CLAIMS]

1. A method for producing a carrier of information, said method comprising the following steps, in order,
 - 5 (1) providing a two-layer assemblage comprising (i) a rigid sheet or web support optionally preprinted with security print, and (ii) a porous opaque ink receiving layer comprising a pigment and a binder,
 - (2) printing digitally stored information onto said porous
10 receiving layer by means of ink jet printing,
 - (3) applying on top of said ink receiving layer in a predetermined pattern a curable varnish, by means of printing, spraying or jetting,
 - (4) after application, before substantial penetration of said
15 varnish in the ink receiving layer, curing said applied varnish, whereby the parts of the ink receiving layer under said predetermined pattern remain non-transparent,
 - (5) overall covering the thus obtained assemblage by coating, printing, spraying or jetting, with a curable lacquer whereby
20 said lacquer penetrates all areas of the ink receiving layer not covered by the pattern of the varnish and renders them substantially transparent, and whereby the non-transparent pattern obtained by application of the varnish forms a watermark,
 - (6) subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a second curing
25 step.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the viscosity of the varnish is clearly higher than the viscosity of the lacquer so that the varnish substantially does not penetrate or penetrates very slowly in the ink receiving layer, while the lacquer does
30 penetrate much faster than the varnish in the ink receiving layer.
3. A method according to claim 1 wherein the interval time between application and curing is clearly shorter for the varnish than for the lacquer so that the varnish has not the time to

- 30 -

substantially penetrate in the ink receiving layer, while the lacquer does penetrate in the ink receiving layer.

4. A method according to any of claims 1 to 3 wherein said varnish and said lacquer are UV curable and the different curing steps
5 are performed by means of UV light.
5. A method according to any of claims 1 to 4 comprising the additional step (5bis), performed between steps (5) and (6), of laminating a protective foil on top of the assemblage.
6. A method according to any of claims 1 to 5 wherein said
10 information printed by ink jet in step (2) is personalized information.
7. A method according to any of claims 1 to 6 whereby steps (2) to (4) are repeated multiple times according to a fixed pattern over the area of the information carrier, and comprising the
15 additional step (7) of cutting the finished assemblage into a set of multiple identification cards.
8. A method according to claim 7 wherein said identification card belongs to the group consisting of an identity card, a security card, a driver's licence card, a social security card, a
20 membership card, a time registration card, a bank card, a pay card and a credit card.
9. A method according to any of claims 1 to 8 wherein said rigid sheet or web support is made of polyvinyl chloride, of polycarbonate or of polyethylene terephthalate.
- 25 10. A method according to any of claims 1 to 9 wherein said pigment comprised in said opaque porous ink receiving layer is an inorganic pigment.
11. A method according to claim 10 wherein said inorganic pigment is silica.

- 31 -

12. A method for producing a carrier of information, said method comprising the following steps, in order,
(1') providing a two-layer assemblage comprising (i) a rigid sheet or web support optionally preprinted with security print,
5 and (ii) a porous opaque ink receiving layer comprising a pigment and a binder,
(2') printing digitally stored information onto said porous receiving layer by means of ink jet printing,
(3') applying on top of said ink receiving layer in a
10 predetermined pattern a curable varnish by means of printing, spraying or jetting, whereby said varnish penetrates the ink receiving layer, thereby creating a transparent pattern,
(4') after penetration, subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a curing step,
15 (5') overall covering the thus obtained assemblage by coating, printing, spraying or jetting, with a curable lacquer,
(6') before substantial penetration of said lacquer in the ink receiving layer, subjecting the thus obtained assemblage to a second curing step, whereby the pattern penetrated by the varnish
20 remains transparent and forms a transparent watermark, and the other parts of the image carrier remain opaque.
13. A method according to claim 12 wherein the viscosity of the varnish is lower than the viscosity of the lacquer so that the varnish does penetrate very fastly in the ink receiving layer,
25 while the lacquer substantially does not penetrate or penetrates much slower than the varnish in the ink receiving layer.
14. A method according to claim 12 wherein the interval time between application and curing is larger for the varnish than for the lacquer so that the varnish does penetrate the ink receiving
30 layer, while the lacquer has not the time to substantially penetrate in the ink receiving layer.
15. A method according to any of claims 12 to 14 wherein said varnish and said lacquer are UV curable and the different curing steps are performed by means of UV light.

- 32 -

16. A method according to any of claims 12 to 15 comprising the additional step (5bis'), performed between steps (5') and (6'), of laminating a protective foil on top of the assemblage.

5 17. A method according to any of claims 12 to 16 wherein said information printed by ink jet in step (2') is personalized information.

10 18. A method according to any of claims 12 to 17 wherein steps (2') to (4') are repeated multiple times according to a fixed pattern over the area of the information carrier, and comprising the additional step (7') of cutting the finished assemblage into a set of multiple identification cards.

15 19. A method according to claim 18 wherein said identification card belongs to the group consisting of an identity card, a security card, a driver's licence card, a social security card, a membership card, a time registration card, a bank card, a pay card and a credit card.

20. A method according to any of claims 12 to 19 wherein said rigid sheet or web support is made of polyvinyl chloride, of polycarbonate or of polyethylene terephthalate.

20 21. A method according to any of claims 12 to 20 wherein said pigment comprised in said opaque porous ink receiving layer is an inorganic pigment.

22. A method according to claim 21 wherein said inorganic pigment is silica.

- 1 -

[ABSTRACT]**IMPROVED CARRIER OF INFORMATION BEARING A WATERMARK**

5 A method for the preparation of an information carrier and an ID
card derived from it is disclosed. The carrier comprises information
applied by ink jet printing on an ink receiver, preferably
personalized information, and a particular new type of a non-
transparent watermark, obtained by applying pattern-wise a curable
10 varnish and curing it before it substantially penetrates in the
receiver, and by applying overall a curable lacquer which on
penetration renders the receiver transparent. In an alternative
embodiment, a reverse procedure is performed giving rise to a
transparent watermark on an opaque background. The finished
15 information carrier is preferably cut in a set of multiple
identification (ID) cards.

